

Hampton

NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

Maryland



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An architectural monument, long-time home of a great Maryland family

HAMPTON, one of the great post-Revolution mansions of America, was built during the period 1783–90. For 158 years it was the home of the Ridgely family, long-prominent in Maryland. Spacious in size, symmetrical in design, and conceived for gracious living, the mansion has those qualities of formal charm and elegance typical of the late Georgian style of architecture. (The name refers to the kings who ruled England during the period 1714–1820, when this architectural style evolved.) Hampton was designated a national historic site because it represents an important phase in the history of American architecture.

The Ridgelys of Hampton

The roots of the Ridgely family go deep in Maryland history. In the 17th century Robert Ridgely migrated from England to St. Mary's County where he resided until his death in 1681. His second son, Charles, was a planter in southern Maryland. The third Ridgely (in the Hampton line), Charles "the Merchant," moved to Baltimore County, where in April 1745 he acquired "Northampton," a 1,500-acre tract laid out in the wilderness just 50 years before. This

was the beginning of "Hampton," the family estate of the Ridgelys.

Within 5 years, the initial purchase had been expanded to over 7,000 acres. When iron ore deposits were found nearby, the Ridgelys bought this land also, and established the "Northampton works." The iron furnace (now under the waters of a city reservoir) soon became one of the principal activities on the estate. During the Revolution it supplied military stores (including cannon and shot) to the patriot forces.

Charles the Builder

Charles "the Merchant" died in 1772. His will confirmed the grant of 2,000 acres made in 1760 to his son, Charles "the Builder." Profiting from the operations of the iron furnace, this later Charles, as soon as the Revolution was over, built on his property "in the forrest" the great mansion that stands today. He died 6 months after its completion. Member of the Maryland House of Burgesses from 1773 to 1789, and a member of the committee appointed to frame a constitution for the State, this Charles Ridgely is probably best remembered today for the magnificent mansion he constructed.



Earliest known sketch of Hampton, drawn by William Birch about 1802.

The Mansion

Many details of Hampton's construction are obscure. Begun in 1783, the earliest known document relating to its construction is a bill for scantling dated March 10 of that year. Jehu Howell, a local carpenter, may have been the "architect," according to the practice of the day. Family papers record that Howell received £3,482 13s. 6½d. for carpentry and woodwork, no paltry sum. When Howell met death by drowning in November 1787, a Baltimore newspaper called him a "very ingenious Architect." But many of Charles Ridgely's own ideas may have gone into Hampton's design.

Howell may have lived in one of the wings of the mansion during the latter part of the construction period. Ridgely and his wife lived in the so-called Overseer's House, dating from the earliest use of the land. One story has it that workers from a distance were allowed to stop work at 3 o'clock each afternoon so as to avoid wolves in the forest at night.

When completed in 1790, Hampton was one of the largest houses of its day, measuring 175 by 55 feet. Built of local stone and stuccoed, its 2½-story main section with



Charles Ridgely, 1730–90, by John Hesselius. The builder of Hampton. *Courtesy, Frick Art Reference Gallery.*

wide porticos was set off by balanced 1-story wings. Its symmetrical design presented a stately appearance, relieved by the "lively" skyline featuring the unusually large cupola ("doom" in the carpenter's records), ornate dormers, and urn-like decorations on the roof.

Hampton in its Heyday

When Charles "the Builder" died, childless, in 1790, the mansion and most of the estate passed to Charles Ridgely Carnan, a nephew. To conform with a provision of the will, the latter changed his name to Charles Carnan Ridgely, and assumed the Ridgely family crest.

Charles Carnan Ridgely, as Governor of Maryland in 1816–19, brought Hampton to the state of grandeur that gave it national fame. The Governor was particularly responsible for the formal gardens at the rear of the mansion, probably employing for their development William Booth, a Baltimore nurseryman. Booth carried on the work begun under the supervision of an indentured servant, Daniel Healy, "Master of his trade," about 1785.

Described as an "object of beauty and renown," the gardens contributed greatly

to the grandeur of Hampton. Though their exact original appearance is unknown (alterations took place after the Governor's death), they consisted basically of 3 terraces containing 2 rectangular parterres each. A broad grass ramp divided the parterres on each level. These were planted in box, laid out in a formal design typical of the 18th century. A wide lawn separated the gardens from the mansion.

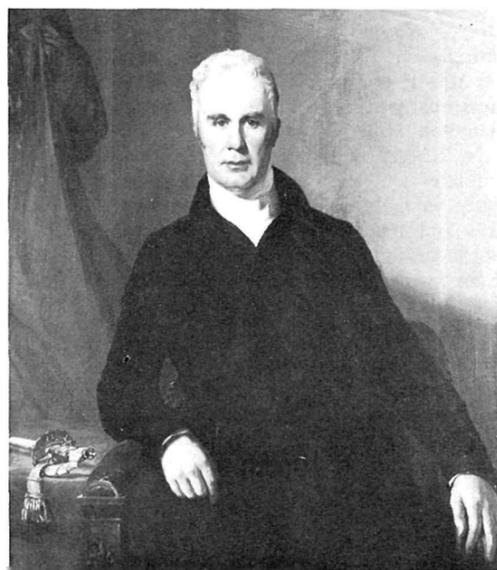
But Hampton was more than a mansion and a garden, more than an "iron plantation." Here life attained a high degree of social elegance. The Governor was reported to "keep the best table in America," and Charles Carroll, the American patriot, mentions a party for which 300 invitations were issued. Fast horses were kept in the stables. Hampton thus reflects a way of life that is part of the great tradition of Maryland social hospitality.

The Site

Hampton National Historic Site includes the mansion, outbuildings, and 45 acres of grounds, the whole purchased with funds donated by the Avalon Foundation.

Since its designation as a national historic

Charles Carnan Ridgely, 1760–1829, by Thomas Sully. The Governor. *Courtesy, National Gallery of Art.*



site in May 1948, Hampton has undergone extensive restoration with additional funds granted by the foundation. The intent has been to return the house and grounds to their appearance in the Governor's lifetime.

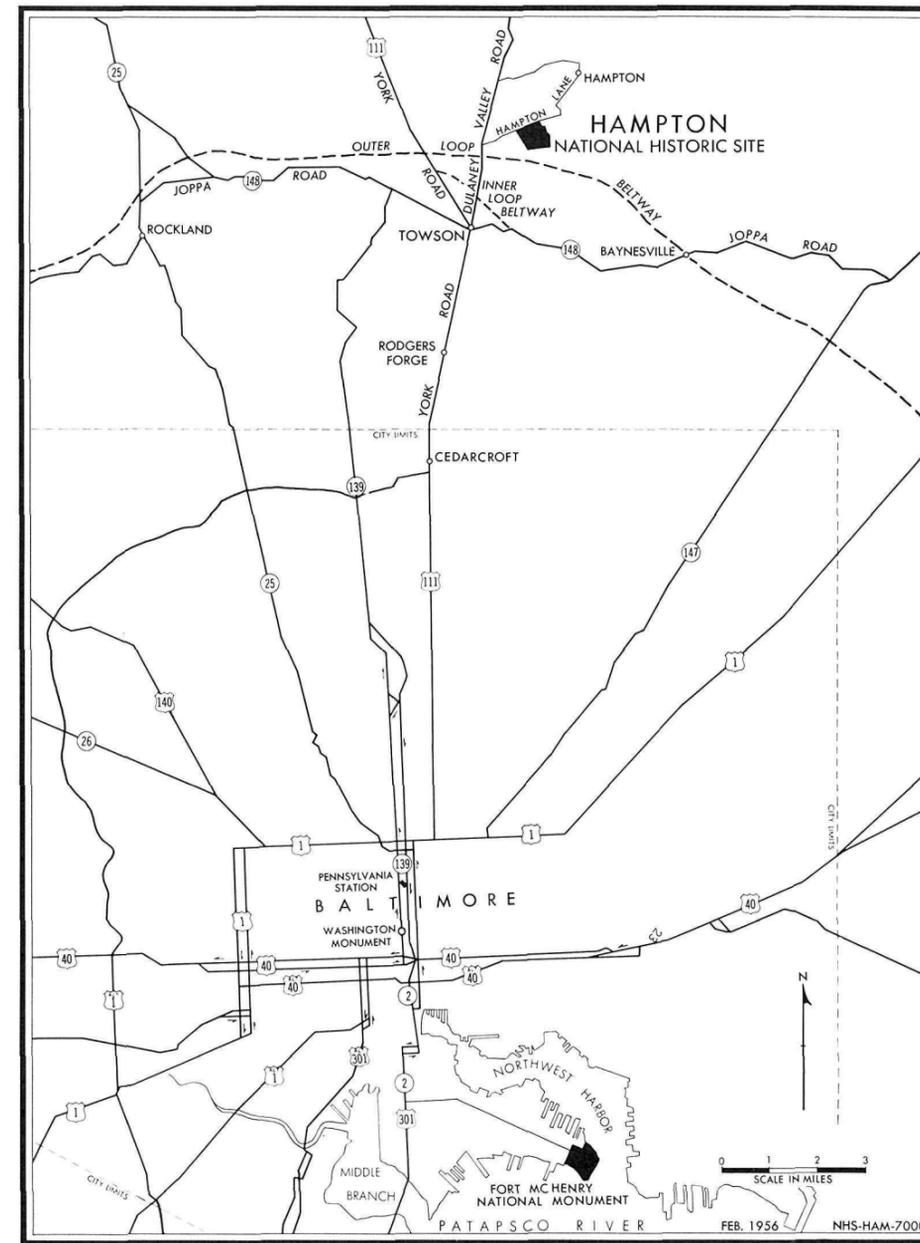
Where necessary on the exterior, the stucco has been patched and painted and the woodwork repaired or replaced. The great cupola has been finished in white and the trim in buff, the original colors. On the interior, tests determined the original colors which were then reproduced. The wainscoting, cornices, and trim were repaired or duplicated by hand from existing originals.

Furnishing the mansion has been relatively easy, for many of the Ridgely family pieces never left the property. Gifts, purchases, and loans provided many other excellent pieces of period furniture.

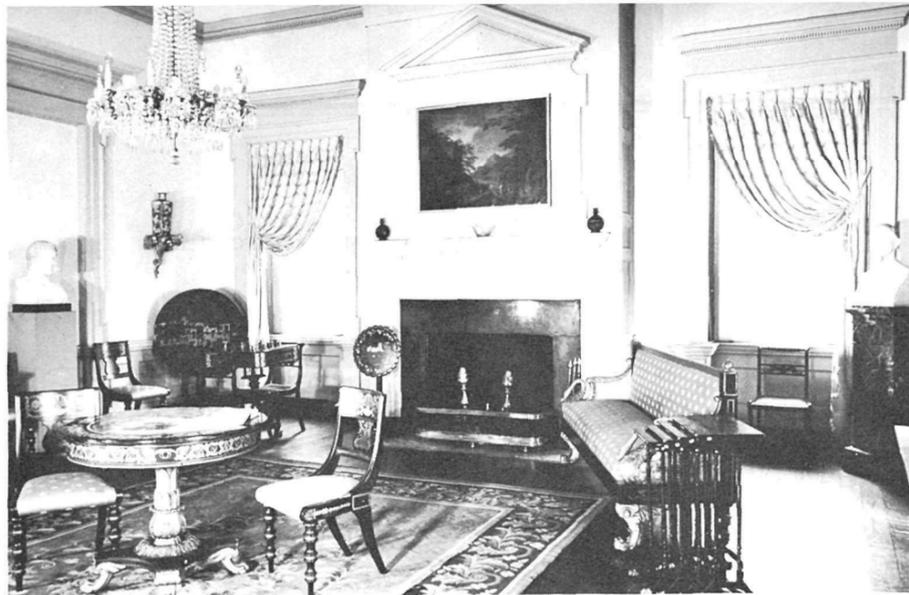
How To Reach the Site

To reach Hampton from Baltimore, follow Charles Street (State Route 139) or York Road (U. S. 111) north to Towson. Take Dulany Valley Road (State Route 146) past Goucher College one-half mile to Hampton Lane; the intersection is marked. Turn right on the lane which leads to the site.

This parterre is believed to follow the original design.



The National Park System, of which this area is a unit, is dedicated to conserving the scenic, scientific, and historic heritage of the United States for the benefit and enjoyment of its people.



The Drawing Room.



The Great Hall.

About Your Visit

The mansion is open Tuesday through Saturday from 11 a. m. to 5 p. m., on Sunday from 1 p. m. to 5 p. m. It is closed on Mondays and from January 15 to February 15. There is a fee of 50 cents for adults and 25 cents for children under 12 years of age. Groups of 25 or more persons receive special rates. Fees are waived for school groups when prior notice of arrival is given. You can make purchases in the antique shop and get refreshments and food in the tearoom. In the Great Hall, a publication giving a more detailed account of Hampton can be purchased.

Administration

Hampton National Historic Site is administered for the National Park Service by the Society for the Preservation of Maryland Antiquities, a private organization. Address communications to the Resident Curator, Hampton National Historic Site, Towson 4, Md.

Guide to the Mansion

The interior of the house adds greatly to its stately grandeur. With this guide, we

believe you will be able to tour Hampton enjoyably and satisfactorily. The rooms, larger than those usually found in mansions of this period, present a rather formal but comfortable appearance with their balanced design and lack of excessively ornate woodwork. Window glass and flooring are original with the house. All chandeliers, except the Waterfords in the Great Hall, are also original. The shutters are on the inside of the house.

DOWNSTAIRS

Great Hall. You enter this room, which measures 53 x 22 feet, through the north portico doorway. In 1820 a guest wrote that 51 people dined here with "plenty of room" for all. Over each doorway is the Ridgely family crest in blue glass. The Waterford chandeliers are rare. A Sarouk rug covers the floor.

The portrait of Governor Ridgely at the left of the entrance is a copy of the original by Thomas Sully. All the mirrors are original to the house. One of the two Empire loveseats near the windows belonged to Betsy Patterson, a famous local beauty. A pair of oriental warmers flank the Hepplewhite sideboard. The side chairs are Chippendale.

Over the Austrian piano in the far left corner is a copy of "The Lady with the Harp," Sully's portrait of Eliza Ridgely, the Governor's daughter-in-law.

Drawing Room. (At the right of the entrance.) This room is outstanding both for its balanced design and original furniture. Family pieces include the black and gold Empire set, believed to have been made by Duncan Phyfe, and the unusual wall brackets of gesso (plaster of Paris on wood, gilded). A Chinese lacquered stand fits into the room style. In the far right corner is a bust of a later Charles Ridgely, master of Hampton from 1867 to 1872. The niches in the walls balance the windows in the best Georgian manner. In front of two of them are the busts of the Roman emperors, Antoninus and Hadrian. The rug is a French Aubusson. Continue down the hall on the right.

Music Room. Many excellent examples of period furniture are in this room. The breakfast and its contents belonged to Governor Ridgely. The harp was Eliza Ridgely's, but it is not the one in the painting in the Great Hall. The paintings from right to left are of Charles Carroll of Annapolis; John

Eager Howard; the Duke of Wellington (over fireplace); and Mary II, Queen of England. Under the Queen's portrait is an Empire sofa that was the Governor's. The door to the right of the fireplace leads to the west wing where, upstairs, was originally the schoolroom and, downstairs, the plantation office. A Sevres tea set is on the table. Note the fine round mirrors on the wall at the left. Please cross the hall.

Dining Room. Historically, this was the sitting room. The "wedding cake" chandelier was at one time in the hall. Original Hesselius portraits of the first master of Hampton (Charles "the Builder") and his wife, Rebecca, dominate the room. Over the fireplace is a painting of Lafayette. Especially valuable are the Chippendale knife urns and the Maryland huntboard (about which the hunters gathered for refreshment). A cupboard for wine is next to the sideboard. Continue down this side of the hall past the stair hall.

Party Room. Historically, this was the dining room. Excellent examples of Ridgely family china are in the cabinet. One of the four boys in the painting is John Ridgely, who became master of Hampton from 1872

to 1938. This portrait by an unknown artist is considered to be a fine 19th century American painting. Enter the room and proceed through the door on the right.

Stair Hallway. The passageway to the left of the stairs leads to the pantry and the kitchen (now the "tearoom"). In the hallway are the clock, chest, and barometer which belonged to the builder. The stairway is plain, unlike those in many of the large houses of the time. Stop while on the landing and look back. The archway was apparently closed shortly after the house was built, probably to conserve heat.

UPSTAIRS

Upper Hall. This hallway is unusual for its heavy, elaborate woodwork and its battery of doorways and closets, over which are broken pediments. The closets (now housing temporary exhibits) were rare in their day. On the right is a portrait of John Ridgely, master of Hampton from 1872 to 1938. Continue around the hall from right to left.

Northeast Bedroom. Named after John Needles, a Baltimore craftsman, whose furniture is now eagerly sought. Needles' work flourished from 1820 to 1860. Though his pieces necessarily are later than the period to which the house is to be restored, they are included (along with several other "late" items) both for their intrinsic value and to indicate that Hampton was a "home" long after 1829.

North Portico Room. This and the south portico room (across the hall) were used as sitting rooms and bedrooms in the summer. The only complete set of Baltimore fruitwood ballroom furniture in America is housed here. Also rare are the "gouache" paintings of Italian scenes. Books owned by the Governor are in the bookcase. This room leads to the Portico with its Chinese Chippendale railing. The original Ridgely estate extended almost as far as you can see. Part

of the white house beyond the picket fence was the dwelling occupied by Charles "the Builder" before the mansion was completed. Note the heart-shaped mansion approach road below you; the shape is rare for the period. Down the gravel road at the right are the Ridgely stables.

North Bedroom. This room is associated with one of the many Hampton ghost stories. Only the Turkey carpet and chandelier are family originals. The carpet, like the one in the master bedroom adjoining, was ordered by Eliza Ridgely in Paris. Near the door is a portrait of Eliza's husband, master of Hampton from 1829 to 1867. The tub and baby bath are Canton ware.

Master Bedroom. Over the mantel is a portrait of Priscilla, wife of the Governor. Original Ridgely pieces are the rug, the bedspread, and the chests—one of camphor wood, the other lacquered. The large wardrobe of ebony, satinwood, and zebrawood is a fine example of early Baltimore craftsmanship.

The Third Floor, which is not open to visitors, contains 10 small rooms. From the hall, a circular stair rises to the cupola.

Grounds. The south portico leads to the grounds. There is a quaint herb garden just beyond the kitchen wing. The broad lawn overlooks the formal gardens. A grass ramp beyond descends to the first of three terraces. The east parterre of the upper level retains what was probably the original design.

Among the notable trees on the grounds are the redcedars, the cedars of Lebanon, the catalpas, and the great magnolia (near the upper greenhouse).

The large mound of earth in front of the mansion, across the drive at the left, covers an old icehouse. At one side of the entrance walk near the parking lot are the ruins of the orangery, destroyed in a fire years ago.

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UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

